

THE COUNT'S COMEDY

Astro Settles the Case of a Foreign Fortune Hunter

BY ALAN BRAGHAMPTON

Drawings by Karl Anderson

IN the great, dim studio of Astro the Palmist, a smartly dressed young man, well groomed, well bred, and with something of that manner for which Harvard has become famous, sat nervously punching holes in the magnificent Turkish rug with the ferule of his bamboo cane. He looked up with a scowl as Astro, dressed in his red silk robe, and his turban with the moonstone clasp, leisurely entered the apartment. For a moment the young man gazed at the seer as if to estimate the man's caliber and character. Astro said nothing; but, bowing gravely, took his seat on the big couch and lazily lighted his water pipe, waiting for his visitor to speak.

"I have come to you," the young man said finally, "although I must confess I don't quite believe in occult powers, because I have an idea that you must know considerable about human nature. You certainly see plenty of it."

Astro bowed again, and a faint smile curled his lips.

"I have also heard you called the Master of Mysteries," the young man continued.

Astro bowed again.

The young man rose and handed the palmist a card. It read, "Mr. John Wallington Shaw."

Astro looked at it and tossed it on the table.

"I suppose you know who I am?"

Astro again bowed.

"It's a part of your business, I suppose. You may have read in the papers also of my sister's engagement to Count D'Amplieri?"

The same sober gesture of assent from the palmist.

Shaw sat down again, shoved his hands into his pockets, crossed his legs, and leaned back. "Mr. Astro," he said, "I've come here on a queer errand. I suppose you see many strange things in your profession, and it seemed to me that your experience would enable you to give me some help. What I want you to do first is to believe something that's nearly incredible."

"My dear sir," said Astro, speaking at last, "nothing is incredible. From what I know of life, the more impossible it seems to be, the more probable it is. For that matter, one has only to read the papers. But, seriously, if I can help you in any way, I shall be glad to do so."

Shaw now took a gold cigarette case from his pocket, selected a cigarette, knocked it against his fist, and struck a match. After the first long inhalation he remarked, "You'll promise, then, to believe the extraordinary story I tell you?"

"Mr. Shaw," Astro replied, "it's easy enough for me to perceive that you are a gentleman. I expect an equal amount of perception from you. At any rate, I hardly see why you should come here to tell me an untruth."

"But what I mean is, I'm afraid you'll think I'm—well, a bit crazy. It's simply too ridiculous. Why, I wouldn't believe it myself, hardly!"

"Let's have it. You have really excited my curiosity," Astro folded his arms and looked at Shaw with sharp eyes. "You certainly show no symptoms of derangement yet."

Shaw gave a nervous laugh. "Oh, it isn't I, it's my sister. That's why it is so hard to tell. I assume of course that this confession will be kept confidential. Not only that, but I expect you to help me out—for an ample consideration."

Astro bowed. "I have secrets enough in this head of mine to destroy a dozen of the first families of New York," he said a little dryly.

Shaw shrugged his shoulders. "Very well. I'll waste no more time. You'll see how useless it is to appeal to the police, or even to my lawyer. But first, have you heard of the robbery of Mrs. Landon's jewels?"

"Oh, yes. The thief, I believe, has never been discovered. It always seemed to me curious, too, that no reward for their return had ever been offered. But what have they to do with your sister?"

SHAW gazed up at the ceiling, then down at the floor. "Really, I'm almost ashamed to tell the story, it's so confoundingly absurd. We are Westerners, you know, of good, sound, and healthy stock. We're as sane as Shakespeare. No trace of brain storms or paranoia in our family! The thing hasn't gone far, but it will be talked about if I can't stop it; that is, if you can't. I don't know what

to do. I'm up a tree. You've got to get hold of whoever's responsible for this thing, and tie them up, some way. It's a serious problem for us."

Astro put his fingers to his lips and yawned.

Shaw took the hint and proceeded abruptly: "Mrs. Landon's jewels are at my house, a whole teapotful of them!"

"Ah! You know the thief, then?"

"No, I don't; nor do I know what the deuce I'm to do with the loot! One thing you are to do is to return it."

"And be accused of the theft myself?"

Shaw shrugged his shoulders. "They have to be sent back somehow. I don't want my sister to be accused of kleptomania; the other thing is quite bad enough. The idea of a gorilla in a top hat and all that! It would make a pretty scandal if it was found out; I can fancy how people would talk. We have a great many friends, you know." He smiled cynically at the word.

"She is innocent, I presume, then?" said Astro.

"But what about the gorilla?"

"There's no use in beating about the bush any longer," said Shaw. "Only, you see, I wanted to make sure of you before I trusted you with the secret. I'll go ahead with it, and if you call it a cock and bull story, I don't see that I can blame you. You see, it was this way: We were down at our country place at Lakeside, a big, rambling old house with a veranda all round it and long French windows opening out on it. My sister's room has a little balcony; it's on the second floor. She had gone up stairs to dress for dinner. I was in my own room, a little way down the hall, and my door was closed at the time. We had a lot of company down for the week-end; it was ten days ago."

"Who were there?"

"Oh, the Count of course, and his valet, and the Churches—you know, Simeon Church and his wife,—the Raddelle girls, and two or three others. I'll give you a list later, if you like."

"All right, go ahead."

It happened, as I say, just before dinner; about half-past seven. It was quite dark. We don't light up much outside,—there was nothing going on at that time. Well, I heard her door open, and then she was pounding on mine, and she called out, 'John, John! Come here quick!' I opened the door, half dressed as I was, and she was in a deuce of a funk. She grabbed me by the arm and pulled me down the hall and shut her door. Then she said, 'Oh! what shall I do?' I said, 'What's the matter, Ethel? Have you been robbed?' She was nearly

fainting, and I thought she would drop before she could speak. But finally I got it out of her. And her story was a wonder, and that's a fact!

"She had sent her maid out of the room for something, and had her back to the French window and was stooping to pick up a comb, when she heard the sash open, and she looked around in a fright. There, standing right in front of her, was a big black gorilla, bowing to her."

"H'm!" Astro concealed his amusement.

"Wait! I made her tell me the story half a dozen times, and it was the same each time. The thing had on a silk hat, and a Peter Pan collar, a red necktie, and white kid gloves, and pearl gray spats buttoned around his knees."

Astro could control his mirth no longer, and his grave demeanor exploded in a gust of hilarity. Shaw, despite his anxiety, had to join the laugh.

"What do you think of that for a fairy tale? But that's not half. This baboon—"

"You said gorilla before."

"Well, gorilla, then; it doesn't matter in a nightmare like that. He held a china soup plate in one hand, and in the other a black bag,—a cloth bag. By Jove! that much I can swear to myself! I've seen it. Well, the chimpanzee thing—"

"I thought it was a baboon."

"How the blazes do I know? I wasn't there, and if I had been I shouldn't have known the difference. It may have been a monkey or an anthropoid ape, for all I know. Anyway, it set the soup plate down on the dressing table, and tipped its hat and said, 'Miss Ethel Shaw, I believe!'"

"Ah!" said Astro. "Now we're getting warmer!"

"Warm! He's made it hot enough for poor Ethel. I can tell you! Then, without waiting for an answer,—Ethel was out of her wits by this time, though she half suspected a practical joke too,—the orang-utan—"

"Or monkey," Astro interjected, smiling.

"Yes, or lemur perhaps,—held out the bag to her. It said, 'From your friends and well wishers in the lunatic asylum.' Then it did a graceful two-step over to the window, recited 'x² plus 2xy plus y², and vanished onto the balcony. My sister was so frightened that she dropped the bag, and—bing!—out dropped Mrs. Landon's pearls and brooches and rings and things all over the floor. Now I ask you what kind of a story is that to get all about town?" He stared at the Master of Mysteries gloomily.

"Well, it certainly would add to the gaiety of nations," Astro remarked quietly; "but it looks like a pretty slim case if your sister had to rely on it for a defense."

"We'd be laughed out of court," Shaw said.

"Did your sister give you any further description of the creature, anything that could identify the masquerader?"

"Why, she said he was a little knock kneed, she

"You'll Promise Then to Believe the Extraordinary Story I Tell You?" Said Shaw.



thought; but that might have been on account of the spats." He grinned sadly, in spite of himself. "Oh, I forgot! By Jove! yes! His breath smelled of garlic, and he wore automobile goggles!"

This was too much for Astro. It was sometime before he could take the thing seriously.

Shaw waited patiently until the palmist stopped laughing. "I knew you'd think I was a blanked fool," he said mournfully; "but it's no joke to the Shaw family, I assure you. Anybody would say Ethel was crazy. I did myself, the very first time she told me this yarn. I said, 'Ethel, you're foolish!' But there was the stuff to prove it! Then she began to cry. The worst of it is the Count is absolutely convinced that Ethel is mad."

AS soon as we had dressed and gone down to dinner, Ethel told the story to the whole crowd. Of course we consider D'Ampleri already as virtually a member of the family, and the others are old friends. Oh, their friendship will be tested, all right enough! The Count looked shocked and changed the subject pointedly, as if the thing was suspicious. It was perfectly evident that he discredited my sister. It made me foam at the mouth; but what could I do? What can we do now? Ethel of course persisted in her story, and the Count has grown cooler and cooler ever since. I'm afraid he'll talk. We can keep the others quiet, easily enough. They have skeletons of their own to hide. What do you make of it, anyway? Is there any way out?"

Astro puffed at his water pipe for a few moments in silence, pulling at his black mustache as he thought. The smoke from his narghile, rising in a blue swaying curve, writhed in a faint arabesque against the velvet hangings of the walls. Shaw had begun punching holes in the rug with his cane again. From the portieres leading to the reception room, where Valeska, Astro's pretty assistant, sat, pretending to work, came a silvery chime of bells as the tall clock struck four. It had begun to grow a little dark. Astro pressed a switch and lighted an electric lamp depending from the ceiling. Instantly the walls glittered with points of light from the embroideries, the weapons, the golden carvings, and other decorations.

"What is your father worth?" the palmist asked. Shaw seemed to awaken from a daze. "If you had asked me two weeks ago, I'd have said, roughly, four millions, or possibly five. But this recent deal in lead has bit him hard. His shrinkage is nearly seventy-five per cent., I suppose. He was almost ruined, in fact. But if you're in doubt as to your fee, why, that'll be all right. It's worth five thousand dollars to us to have the matter settled. We'd have to pay that in blackmail, I suppose. If you can think of any way to return the jewels and no questions asked, and head off this insanity charge, the money's yours."

"Had any dowry been settled on Count D'Ampleri?"

Shaw blushed faintly. "Oh, I say!" he began. "I am aware that it's a Continental practice, that's all," Astro said suavely. "It is inevitable with an international marriage, isn't it?"

"Yes. I fought against it as hard as I could; but Ethel can make the governor do anything she likes. Besides, my mother was set on the match, you know and she helped arrange all that. They do it through lawyers, you know. It isn't quite so crude as it sounds; but it's bad enough. Yes, we arranged to buy the title for Ethel, I suppose." He kept his eyes on the rug in some embarrassment. There was too a trace of anger in his tone. It was evident that the affair did not please him in any way.

VERY well. I'll undertake the commission, delicate as it is," Astro said, rising. "I'd like to have the jewels delivered here sometime next week. You had best bring them yourself. I wish also you'd find out just when the Count D'Ampleri arrived in America, and by what boat. I suppose you can tell me the day and hour of your sister's birth?"

Shaw wheeled round on him. "Oh, come, now!"

he protested. "I came to you because you know or ought to know most of the weaknesses of human nature; but if you think I take any stock in astrology or occultism—"

"What was the day, did you say?" Astro's voice was hard.

"October 14th, 1885; nine A. M., I believe," Shaw scowled.

"My dear Mr. Shaw," said Astro, "if you give me this commission, you must let me do it my own way. It won't matter to you, I should think, how I do it. You are, I presume, an agnostic. Very good. I am a fatalist. Go to a detective or a doctor, if you prefer modern science. I prefer the ancient lore."

"I came to you because you've done harder things than this," Shaw said to placate the independent seer. "Go ahead with your cusps and nativities, if you like, only get us out of this fearful mess as safely and quickly as you can."

"From Your Friends in the Lunatic Asylum," the Creature Said.



"I hope to see you on Monday," said Astro, bowing with dignity.

JOHN WALLINGTON SHAW left the room. As soon as he had departed, Valeska entered, laughing, the dimples showing in her cheeks and chin.

Astro's pose had gone. He threw off his robe and turban. "Did you hear the uncouth history?" he asked.

Valeska nodded. "Of all things! Can it be true?"

"Easily. Simple as milk. And at the same time one of the cleverest schemes I ever heard of. It's all straight; that is, all except the jewels. That we'll have to investigate."

"But I don't understand it at all," Valeska pouted.

"Have you happened to hear that Count D'Ampleri has been paying rather too marked attention, for an engaged man, to Miss Belle Miller, she that the cruel wits of the 400 have dubbed the 'Bay Mare'?"

"I knew she was in here one day for a reading."

"And was much interested in my prediction that she was to marry a titled foreigner. I heard the gossip at the Lorrsons the day I went to that tea. I never forget items of that sort. They are more important than horoscopes."

"I think I have a glimmer of light, now," said Valeska. "The Bay Mare is an heiress, isn't she?"

"Rather! Old man Miller owns half of Buffalo."

"And Shaw is on the verge of failure."

"And the Count wants a good excuse to transfer his affections and his hopes of a permanent income. What better escape than to impute insanity to Miss Ethel Shaw? I say it's a merry scheme."

Valeska frowned. "It's horribly cruel!"

"Well, it's infamously Italian, if you like. Fancy one of the Borgias reappearing to grace the twentieth century! But you can't deny it is cleverly worked

out. Insanity is one of the best reasons for marrying, even for a fortune hunting foreigner. Everyone will pity him, instead of blaming him, and he'll walk out of the Shaw family into the arms of the Millers. He only wanted to be well off in the old love before he was on with the new. He'll forgive him anything for the sake of the automobile goggles."

"And the Peter Pan collar!" cried Valeska, laughing. "Couldn't you hear me giggling in the closet?"

"The Lander jewels, though," said Astro thoughtfully. "If it wasn't for them, one might suspect that Miss Ethel had taken an overdose of headache powders. Acetanilid does affect the brain, you know."

"The question is, Who played the gorilla?"

"Ah, an Italian, I'm afraid. If you'll pardon the pun, I think that garlic puts us on the scent. I see it, it's a case where our whilom friend McGraw can help us out. I'll try him. There'll be no particular credit in it for him; but, what's just as good, there'll be money."

FROM an interview with his friend the police lieutenant that night Astro found out that one had been suspected of the robbery of Mr. Lander's jewels strongly enough to warrant arrest. Ethel Shaw and her fiancé were both present at the Lander reception held on the night when the jewels were stolen. A charge of kleptomania might therefore, be reasonably preferred against her. A young Shaw had said, such an accusation, coupled with her testimony as to the method by which she obtained the jewels, would deal a serious blow to the Shaws' social aspirations.

McGraw had too often profited by Astro's assistance in puzzling cases not to do his best to help the palmist; but nothing was known by the police about the Count or his valet. It was found, however, that, on his passage across the Atlantic in the Penumbria Count D'Ampleri had taken no servant. This of itself was of sufficient importance for Astro to request McGraw to look up the man and furnish a description of him and his circumstances. This in a few days, revealed the fact that the valet had a dubious reputation, and it was suspected that he had been in prison. McGraw himself was not sure at first, but subsequently a brother officer familiar with the Italian quarter of New York positively identified him as Kneesy Tim, who had done time for second-story work, and was so called among his pals on account of his knock knees.

It did not take the officer long after that to ascertain through the detective force that Tim had attended the Lander reception as Count D'Ampleri's valet. The line of evidence was now direct. Tim had welded the most important link of it himself by appearing as the bearer of the stolen jewels. His boldness was accounted for, of course, by the fact that he relied on his ludicrous appearance to make Miss Shaw's story incredible, at the same time preventing any identification of himself. In all this it was impossible not to suspect the Count of being an accessory; if, indeed, he did not plan the whole thing.

But why had the thief been willing to surrender such valuable booty? If the Count was merely after money, here was a treasure in the hands of his accomplice. The answer was an easy one for Astro to solve when Shaw produced the black bag full of Mrs. Lander's heirlooms.

THE jewels were all false. Astro's critical eye needed but one careful look at them. They were marvelous imitations, but of no possible use to anyone except the owner, who would never be suspected of having hypothecated her celebrated gems. It was evident now why Mrs. Lander, the respectable, aristocratic Mrs. Lemuel Lander, of the Lander jewels—had never offered a reward for their capture. Astro, cynical as he was, familiar as he was with the many hypocrisies of the upper ten of the town, could not help laughing when he held the famous Lander tiara up to Valeska's envious view.

"I'll never believe in anybody or anything again," she exclaimed. "Did you tell Mr. Shaw?"

"Not after his remarks on my profession," said Astro, with a decided shake of his head. "That's the time he did himself out of a hearty laugh at Mrs. Lander's expense. In any case, I don't believe in ever telling any more than is necessary."

"The Count is an ordinary crook, then?"

"I doubt that. Nor is he even an ordinary Count. He's a clever, bourgeois Frenchman. I have talked with him and know. I imagine that he picked up this fellow Tim to help him play the part, and found out afterward what he was and used him. But that doesn't matter. We have them now on the hip."

"And how are you going to fix him? From what I hear, he is more attentive than ever to the Bay Mare, and people are talking about it."

"That doesn't matter. If Miss Ethel can get rid of him without his telling that ridiculous story, she'll undoubtedly call it good riddance to bad rubbish. And I will fix that."

"How?"

MY dear, if you'll walk up and down on Eighth Avenue, between 37th and 38th-sts., from ten to half-past ten to-morrow night, you'll see. And," he continued, smiling to himself, "I think it will be

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The Count's Comedy

Continued from page 10

worth your attendance. I think we might ask Shaw to escort you, if he's willing to disguise himself a little, enough so that the Count won't recognize him."

"I shall be there," said Valeska. "I promise a comedy," said Astro. "By the by, it may interest you to know that I have rented a room at No. 573 Eighth-ave."

"Indeed?" said Valeska, raising her brows. "I imagine from your tone that I'm not to ask you any questions; but I would like to know if you are through with McGraw."

"No, indeed. McGraw is to figure as the *Deus ex machina*; also he is to earn two thousand dollars. One he will collect from me, and one from Mrs. Landor, who will be very glad to pay, I imagine, if he acts strictly *ex cathedra*. In other words, it is not particularly to Mrs. Landor's interest for the public to know that she has sold her jewels and wears paste."

"I begin dimly to comprehend now," Valeska mused. "You will emulate the Mikado of Japan, and let the punishment fit the crime?"

Astro replied, "My dear, in the mutual interaction of telepathic vibrations, one neutralizes the other. Two loud sounds can be made to produce a silence. Selah. *Tara ak khaidah mahi tara abracadabra mahi tara*."

"Boom-de-ay!" Valeska added gaily. "Precisely. And, speaking of nonsense, I didn't ask you to get me a pair of white duck trousers and a yellow striped blazer and an old woman's wig and a green umbrella and a white top hat, did I?" He looked thoughtfully at his fingernails.

"No you didn't," she replied briskly; "nor a bottle of soothing syrup nor a tombstone." "Nevertheless, you will do this to-morrow morning, and have them sent to No. 573 Eighth-ave."

"I agree, if you'll only let me add some rubber boots."

"Well, as a special favor, yes. Now run along and I'll get to work. Oh, Tim was arrested to-day, on suspicion of having stolen the Landor jewels. Too bad, isn't it?"

He sat down, thereupon, to write a letter as follows:

Terribile sbaglio fatto. Voi siete in gran pericolo. Incontratemi martedì a mezzanotte nell'andrata del No. 573 Ottava Avenue. Venite solo.

He showed it to Valeska and translated as follows:

"Terrible mistake made. You are in great danger. Meet me Tuesday at midnight in the doorway of No. 573 Eighth-ave. Come alone."

"T."

Roughly scrawled on brown paper, and put into a plain but dirty envelope, the note was convincing. Tim, at any rate, would not be able to deny it for sometime. It was not a message that the Count D'Ampleri would dare ignore.

THE Count D'Ampleri did not ignore it. Smart and aristocratic in appearance, though foreign looking with his Parisian silk hat, his queer trousers, and his waxed and pointed mustache, he was prompt at the rendezvous. Valeska and John Wallingford Shaw, drifting slowly down the block, noticed him there waiting in the dusky doorway, looking impatiently up and down, smoking a cigarette. The Count seemed to be a bit uneasy. He lighted one cigarette after another.

The two spectators passed again, talking absently one to the other, but watching guardedly as they passed. At the 37th-st. corner they noticed a man standing, his back against a lamp post. A child would have known him to be a policeman in plain clothes. His burly figure, his bull neck, the very cut of his mustache, proved it indubitably. He gave them a wink as they passed him. They crossed to the other side of the avenue and walked slowly. As they reached the far end of the block they suddenly stopped. Valeska began to giggle, pointed, and excitedly watched the scene across the street. Shaw seized her arm and hurried her over the crossing and to the front of the doorway. The little drama was almost over. As they stopped, staring, a fantastic figure retreated, entered the door, and banged it behind him.

They were laughing at the Count's disfigurement as McGraw came up. He took his cue like an actor, and walking up to the Count grabbed him fiercely by the arm.

"Now then," he said harshly, "what you a-do'n' here? What's that you got there?" He pointed to a black bag the Italian still held in his hand.

"Who are you, anyway?" said the Count angrily. "Vat beesnees of yours? Tell me that!"

"I'll show you!" and McGraw threw back his coat and displayed his badge. "See here now! What have you got in that bag at this time of night, hangin' round in this doorway?"

"My God! I don't know myself!" the Count exclaimed.

"I'll see, then," said McGraw, and snatching it from him he opened the bag and drew out a diamond tiara.

"You don't know!" he thundered. "We'll see about that at the station house! Come along with me!"

The Count, seeing the jewels, seemed almost ready to faint with surprise and horror. "But I am very innocent!" he wailed. "I am ze Count D'Ampleri. I live at ze St. Regis! You shall see! Before heaven! I never knew that things was there! It was give me just now, by—by—" He paused, discomfited.

"Well, by who?" was McGraw's inquiry. "You will not believe—nobody won't believe—it ees too much. A mad woman she give me zis bag just now zis minute!"

"What kind of a woman? Out with it!" "Oh! what shall I say? You will not believe. A woman like a man, with white pantaloon, with a top hat, a yellow jacquette with stripes like zis." He made a pitiful gesture down the front of his coat.

"Aw, g'wan!" said McGraw. "D'you expect me to believe a pipe dream like that? That's the worst I ever heard, and I've heard some thin ones."

"But I tell ze truth, I swear it! She have a green ombrelle."

"Any more? Go as far as you like." McGraw's tone was affable.

"She wear big boots of *la gomme*,—what you call it—rubbaire."

McGraw towered above him now, and calmly folded his arms. "No blue whiskers, or purple hatpins stuck in her face, was they? She wasn't chewin' shavin's or have red paint on her hands, I suppose? Lord, man! you've got no imagination at all! Why, I can dream out things that would make that old lady seem like a fashion plate. When I dope 'em out they generally wears armor plate and tin gloves at least. But I guess that'll be about all for you. I'm going to run you in."

The Count, in despair appealed to Valeska. "But ze lady and ze gentleman, she see ze old woman! Ask them! I am spik ze truth to you!"

Valeska, smothering her laughter, did her best to speak calmly. "We saw nothing at all, officer. The man must be intoxicated."

"Or crazy," Shaw put in wickedly.

"You see nozing?" the Count ejaculated in amazement. Then he dropped in a dejected huddle, nodding his head silly.

papermen. Will you let us come aboard?" "No," came the cold response from the officer on watch, whose faint silhouette could be seen moving across the bridge.

"How are you lying? Is there any damage to your propellers or rudder? Can we take anyone ashore, or help in any other way?"

Not a sound from the bridge.

"How did you come to go aground? Can we take any message to the main office?"

These questions, ignored and unanswered as the tug circled fanwise round the Baltic's bow, irritated the men who had an edition to catch; for they realized that the trip back to New York against a merciless ebb tide was a task in itself, and every minute counted.

In despair, one of the reporters grasped the megaphone and shouted across the Baltic's deck, "There are thousands of friends and relatives on land who are anxious for the safety of your passengers! Can you hear that? Unless we get a talk with the Captain, their fears may be intensified by what they may read in the morning!"

The effect was instantaneous. Dark shadows darted back and forth across the bridge. A quartermaster was sent below, and Captain Ranson, who knew nothing of the megaphone warfare waged above, came on deck and gave a complete and accurate account of the grounding, and of the condition of his steamer.

Theatrical News Comes Easy

POSSIBLY the class of news easiest obtained aboard ship is theatrical news,—the gossip of players as they come and go. While the reporters make an effort to find and talk to the actors and managers, the omnipresent press agent is forever in pursuit of the reporter with a handful of manifold copy containing a voluminous account of what his particular star has done abroad, and her plans for the forthcoming season.

It must not be assumed, however, that all actors crave publicity. William Gillette, John Drew, Julia Marlowe, the late Richard Mansfield, and others have embarked from New York and returned to it in the most conservative fashion, with never a word volunteered for publication.

Once a manager, assisted by an ambitious press agent with unlimited nerve and some imagination, devised a scheme for publicity which compelled his star to take a daily sociological junket through the steerage. The bejeweled lady of the footlights fondled the near-clean children of immigrants who did not understand her language; was godmother for a Russian infant; nursed back to health a disabled stoker; managed the concert aboard ship for the benefit of the widows and orphans of seamen; and distributed five hundred dollars among the young mothers of the steerage. It was a distasteful bit of acting,—a week of realism off the stage,—but it was the talk of the ship, and well worth the subsequent publicity. The scheme was imitated by others; but failed utterly. The novelty was gone.

A show girl of more or less obscurity, returning from Southampton, tried earnestly to thrust herself into the ship news limelight; but failed. In despair, as the steamer was warping in, she jumped upon a heap of baggage on the promenade deck, and right before the gaze of the cabin passengers removed a cardinal red stocking from her right foot and waved it to friends on the pier. Her trump card forced the press gang to sit up and take notice, and in the morning papers there were stories—some in prose verse—about the shocking removal of a stocking while the steamship was docking before a mocking crowd. The name of the young woman who bared her foot for

McGraw motioned to Valeska, and now toward 17th-st.

"Well, I'll have to go," she said, smiling. "You'd better be careful, officer; he may be dangerous." And so saying she walked on with Shaw, who was too nearly hysterical with mirth to speak for awhile. When he did was to say:

"Will you kindly inform Astro when you see him that I take back what I said in horoscopes and occultism? I am quite sure he will understand."

SHE repeated the message next day, and she and Astro found themselves alone in the studio. Astro smiled. "It they was like John Wallington Shaw," he said, "and I wouldn't make much of a living in girl." Then he added irrelevantly, "I understand that the Count D'Ampleri is to sail the Germanic next week."

"Oh. Then McGraw let him off?"

"All McGraw wanted was to get his hands out of Mrs. Landor and the less about it the better. He telephoned me morning to say that she gave him a very long half-hour, but paid. By the way, I wonder Shaw told his sister Ethel how the matter solved?"

"He said he intended to, before he went to bed."

"Then we may consider the episode done. Astro took down a volume of Immanuel Kant. Before he began his reading he remained casually, "It was a narrow escape for all the I don't know exactly which one to congratulate the most."

"I'd congratulate the old lady with the white duck trousers and the blazer," said Valeska. "I think she had the merriest time of all."

"Thank you kindly," said Astro, with a rare smile. "I'll accept with pleasure."

END OF THE SERIES.

Rounding Up News on Ocean Liners

Continued from page 4

publicity was carefully omitted, however, all the stories, and the aggressive efforts to show girl went for naught.

The ruses of the press agent are legion. Sometimes they enshroud the return of a star from Europe with great mystery. The highly communicative and entertaining actor, who the spell of the press agent, is now as good as the Duke of Windsor and as intelligent as Laurence Olivier. This is done to stimulate reporters to run down a supposed story to carry the mystery, unsolved perhaps, into print.

A press agent recently sent his latest woman aboard the outgoing French liner *Touraine* to bid a friend goodbye. The *Touraine* sailed at ten o'clock in the morning, and the actress had a matinee at two. Of course, according to instructions, she "forgot" to ashore before the gangplank was hauled and at the proper moment there was a hubbub of real emotional screaming. The steamer backed out into the North River, headed for Sandy Hook, the press agent and photographer on a tug previously engaged at twenty-five dollars an hour steamed out to an adjacent pier. After tooting overtime, attract the attention of the multitude by melodramatic rescue, the tug made fast to the *Touraine* and took the young actress ashore. The press agent admitted afterward that publicity was worth five times the hire of the tug.

Afraid for Their Jobs

RETICENCE on part of Captains and officers of the liners in talking for publication due to a false fear of misrepresentation, is misquoted or to appear in type as spokes for a statement objectionable to the liner, sufficient ground for dismissal or transfer of the service. But there is a tendency among the various lines, especially the German, to give out rather than suppress the news that is, if the news is not objectionable to either the company or its patrons. In the North German Lloyd line recently sent unto itself a press agent.

When Philadelphia Jack O'Brien was sailing from Liverpool on the *Cunard* *Umbria* after his Australian trip he passed a sparring bout with some good music-hall opponent. He made his wishes known, and the news soon found its way into the *Illustrated*. Two brawny trimmers who had something of a pugilistic reputation when in the navy presented their compliments to O'Brien and begged that he be good enough to take them on for a round or two. O'Brien agreed, donned his fighting togs, and administered each in two rounds his favorite musical anesthetic.

When the fighter came ashore he was met by a bevy of sporting writers, and among the first questions asked of him was, "Did you do any training on the way over?"

O'Brien laughed and told them the inside of his bout with the coal trimmers.

The next day there was a story in the newspapers about Philadelphia Jack O'Brien on the high seas. It was on the deck of the *Umbria* in mid Atlantic before the assembled passengers, and was the only incident to liven an exceedingly monotonous voyage. The *Umbria* was cabled to London, and a day later a printed account of the fight lay before the directors of the *Cunard* line. When the *Umbria* returned to Liverpool, Captain Dow had to explain why a vulgar pugilistic encounter was tolerated aboard his steamer.

After receiving from Captain Dow a report of the affair, the directors concluded that the fight must have been a four-minute, and exonerated the skipper.